

## REMARKS

### *General:*

Claims 1-22 are pending in the application. Claims 1-19 stand rejected. Claims 20-22 stand allowed. Claims 10-14 and 17-19 are canceled. Claims 1, 4, and 19 are amended. Claims 23-31 are new. Claims 1-9, 15-16, and 20-30 are pending in this application after this amendment.

Claim 1 is amended to recite a chord length in the range of from approximately 0.75 inches to approximately 3 inches. Support for the specific numeric range is found at least in original claim 22.

Claim 4 is rewritten in independent form, and is amended to recite a radius in the range of from approximately 0.75 inches to approximately 3 inches. Support for the specific numeric range is found at least in original claims 5, 6, and 22.

New claims 23-30 are directed to a digester including the screen plate, and otherwise mirror claims 1-6, 8, and 16. Support for claims 23-30 is found in Fig. 1 of the drawings and the associated text, which shows a digester with the screen panels installed.

No new matter has been added by this amendment.

### *35 U.S.C. § 103:*

Claims 1, 4, 7, and 16 stand rejected as obvious over U.S. Patent No. 6,165,323 (Shearer) in view of WO 93/07334 (Aaltonen et al.) and U.S. Patent No. 6,284,145 (Andersson). Claims 1 and 4 are amended to recite specific dimensions that are not disclosed or suggested by the cited reference and claims 7 and 16 are dependent from claims 1 and 4. These claims are believed to be allowable for substantially the same reasons as given by the examiner for the allowability of original claims 2, 3, 5, 6, and 20-22.

Claims 9-15 and 17-19 stand rejected as being obvious over Shearer, Aaltonen, and Andersson and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,638,960 (Beuermann et al.). Claims 17

and 18 are canceled. Claims 9-15 and 19 are dependent claims, and it is noted that Beuermann is relied on only for the additional features of the dependent claims. Without prejudice to their individual merits, claims 9-15 and 19 are deemed allowable over the prior art as claims dependent from an allowable base claim.

Claim 8 stands rejected as being obvious over Shearer, Aaltonen, and Andersson and further in view of EP 0 287 267 (Chupka). Claim 8 is a dependent claim, and it is noted that Chupka is relied on only for the additional features of dependent claim 8. Without prejudice to its individual merits, claim 8 is deemed allowable over the prior art as a claim dependent from an allowable base claim.

***Double patenting:***

The examiner indicated that claims 9 and 17, and claims 11 and 18, were open to objection as being substantial duplicates. Claims 11, 17, and 18 have been canceled, and this objection is therefore moot.

Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7-11, 13, 14, and 17-19 were provisionally rejected for non-statutory double patenting over parent application no. 10/193,500. It is noted this is only a provisional rejection. Applicant requests that the present application be allowed to proceed to grant under MPEP § 804.I.B, second paragraph, and that the question be revisited if and when otherwise allowable subject matter is indicated in application no. 10/193,500. In order to simplify the prosecution of the two applications, applicant proposes to cancel or amend claims 2, 4, 5, and 17-19 of application no. 10/193,500, and to consolidate all the claims presently indicated as allowable into the present application.

***Allowable subject matter:***

The examiner's allowance of claims 20-22 is acknowledged with appreciation.

Claims 2, 3, 5, and 6 were indicated as allowable if rewritten in independent form. Claims 2, 3, 5, and 6 are now dependent from base claims that are believed to be allowable, and are believed now to be allowable.

***New claims:***

Claims 23-30 are believed to be allowable for at least the same reasons as claims 1-6, 9, and 16, respectively.

***Conclusion:***

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration of the examiner's rejections and an early notice of allowance of all of claims 2, 4-8, 15, and 17-25 are earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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